

Studies of Sullivan County Broadband Access, Community Wind Energy Development to Move Forward

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced two investments from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development that will help to promote expanded broadband access and community wind energy development in Sullivan County. Hinchey was instrumental in securing a \$65,000 Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) on behalf of Sullivan County to conduct a study of broadband access, and a \$221,077 grant for the Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development (SASD) to study and develop concrete initiatives for community-owned wind power in the county.

"As a result of these investments, Sullivan County will be able to generate the information it needs to increase access to broadband and facilitate the development of wind energy projects, both of which will help drive economic development in the area," said Hinchey who supported both grant applications. "Expanded broadband access is critical for the success of existing businesses and vital in attracting new enterprises to the Catskills. The community wind energy initiative will also help the county create new jobs and economic opportunities for communities, while providing a cleaner and more sustainable source of energy for our region."

"The grant of \$65,000 will fund a communications study, which is the first step in an effort to improve Sullivan County's communications broadband and cellular telephone infrastructure and is an integral component within the county's efforts to coordinate all economic development resources and strategies," noted Jonathan Rouis, Chairman of the Sullivan County Legislature.

Sullivan County's grant for broadband development will be coordinated by the New York State Rural Development statewide office in Syracuse. It will be used to implement a comprehensive study of the county's current communications infrastructure. The study will yield a phased roll-out plan for broadband and cellular telephony development.

The grant to Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Energy Development (SASD) will fund a study by Sustainable Energy Developments, Inc. (SED), the consulting firm which authored the 2005 wind market assessment for Sullivan County, which identified significant wind resource potential in the Towns of Liberty, Callicoon, Rockland and Fremont. This study will produce a roadmap that locates and describes very specific shovel ready sites for community-owned wind power

projects. The funded work will also provide a successful action plan for the other municipalities in the county and the region to control and maximize benefits of the development of their wind resources.

Dick Riseling, Executive Director of the SASD stated, "The Sullivan County Community Wind Development project will provide critical investment in research and area-wide planning that will enable our rural communities to sustainably harness their wind resources and thereby serve as a catalyst for economic development in a region that has faced economic distress for more than thirty years."

Sullivan County was given priority in the competition for these grants because of its designation as a Rural Enterprise Area Partnership (REAP) Zone. Hinchey established the Sullivan-Wawarsing REAP Zone in 1999. REAP Zones were created to help spur economic development in struggling rural areas and are pilot projects of the USDA. In January 1999, Hinchey persuaded the USDA to establish this new program in his congressional district on a 10-year trial basis, which was approved by the Clinton administration. As a result, a REAP Zone covering all of Tioga County and a second zone in Sullivan County and the Town of Wawarsing were designated. The REAP Zones in the State of New York are two of just five such areas in the entire nation.

Last year, USDA Rural Development signed an agreement with both the Tioga REAP and Sullivan County-Wawarsing REAP that extended the REAP program for those areas until September 30, 2012. The authorization to extend the REAP program was made possible through agricultural legislation that Hinchey helped pass through Congress in 2008.

The REAP Zone established a collaborative, citizen-led effort to enhance economic development and enable local communities to develop and implement strategies to create long-term prosperity. The two REAP Zones in New York were established in critical parts of the state that had experienced economic dislocation and job loss as the state's rural economy changed. The REAP Zone initiatives serve as an important model for coordinated efforts to revitalize and diversify distressed rural economies in other regions of New York State and the country.